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# Part 01 John Muir Autobiography

John Muir

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the plan; and when a word was missed in spelling, or a mistake in pronouncing a word, it went down the class, and the scholar who spelled the word correctly, he went to the head of the class, or at least took the place of the scholar that first missed, and he kept working up, and perhaps in the course of time, if he held his place, he naturally worked his way up to the head, and he was then called "Dux", and it was a great thing to go home and tell mother that I was "Dux" - Dux, from the Latin - Duke, I suppose, - a leader.

I think it was the third book which was called "Chambers' Rudiments of Knowledge". That was the first book that ever interested me with the matter that was in it, the others were simply lessons without any point, but "Chambers' Rudiments of Knowledge"! Those were -- (Chambers Brothers in Edinburgh were very reliable men). It was a sort of novel experiment, in teaching at the same time they taught to read, they also conveyed instruction telling about things, and it was the first



illustrated book, I think, that ever was introduced into the schools of Scotland, so far as I know. It had pictures, for example, of the printing press, showing how books were made and how they were bound, and so forth; and it also had a great many interesting stories with a moral, and some instruction connected with them. For example, to show the amount of interest that some of those stories in that book had - one in particular was called "Llewellyn's Dog" - (That is one of your Welsh stories ! - "Llewellyn's Dog". It was - I think that was in verse, and it was from Southey; one of Southey's stories - one of his poems. Llewellyn had a dog whose name was Gellert. (I don't know what that is - I suppose that also is a Welsh name). Gellert was the favorite of his master, and was a great hunting dog. His master used to go on hunts, and when he blew the horn, this dog was always the foremost of all the other dogs, and the favorite. One morning when he started out - (whether it was morning or whatever time it was ! - he started out



on the hunt and blew his horn for his dogs, and Gellert was missing, and, as the story went, Llewellyn said

"Why art thou the last Llewellyn's horn to hear?"

Still, Gellert could not be found. Then news came that his son was lost, and they hunted everywhere for the boy; couldn't find him; and they thought that the boy had been killed with a wolf or something, or that he had fallen and been killed, and could not imagine what had become of him. But after they had searched everywhere, along came Gellert, and he was all covered with blood; and Llewellyn at once believed that from the blood on that dog, that he had killed and devoured his son, and he cursed the dog, and said: "By thee my son's devoured", and he immediately thrust his sword into the dog's side and killed him. (I have forgotten how, but he killed the dog). And, after having taken vengeance on the dog, at last the boy was found, looking up smiling, perfectly safe and sound, and a few paces away lay a great wolf that Gellert had killed in defending the boy. And then,



of course, poor Llewellyn felt pretty bad, you know. He was distressed to think that, mingled with the joy of recovering his favorite child, he had the remorse of having killed the dog that had saved his life. He thought that he had eaten him - had devoured him where in reality he had saved him; and the awful life-long sorrow - sort of hasty action, you know - I suppose that was the moral of it. But we boys in school - we would turn again and again to that story, and it had such influence on our feelings and our imagination and emotions ! We would literally sit there and cry for hours on the bench over that story ! Not many stories in readers are as touching as that. That I have never forgotten, and I suppose it happened some sixty-two to sixty-three years ago; Oh ! more ! - sixty-six or sixty-seven years ago. And that is just one of the things that stand out in my school days - the awful fate of poor Gellert ! - and the misery of that owner who had concluded so out of reason. He reasoned that the dog, because of that blood,



must have eaten and devoured his child; but it shows the influence of a real story, that is, anything real, that touches the heart of even small children. How interesting that was, and how great a mark it made on our minds ! Not amusement, but instruction, and the stirring of the emotions. (Let me see !). Oh ! there was another story in that book that stirred other kinds of emotions. That read of the Inch Cape Bell, and it told, you know, of how, in order to warn - how a ~~fixt~~ priest put a light off the coast for to warn mariners from dangerous rocks; and then it stated -- it was another of Southey's, I think - stories; of a pirate and a priest. There was a rock near the Inch Cape where many ships had foundered, and this priest (I don't know as it gave his name). It called him simply the Priest of Aber bro Thauk ! - That was the name of his monastery, I think. ( I think I have got that same school book at home). Well, this priest invented and put a bell on that rock, and it rung the louder the bigger the waves and greater the storm it



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was, and the greater the danger of ships being run on that rock, the louder and louder its warning rang. A pirate by the name of Ralph the Rover, he was sailing past that rock in fine weather, and listening to the gentle ringing of the bell, and he lowered a boat and put out to the bell; and, he said, "I'll go and sink that bell, cut the rope that holds it, and", he said, "I'll plague the priest of Aber bro Thauk by cutting that bell off the rock". He reached out and cut that bell, and the bell went down with a gurgling sound, and bubbles rose and ~~pressed~~<sup>burst</sup> around. Then, Sir Ralph the Rover, sailed away; he scoured the seas for many a day.

At last, he had grown rich with his plunder and spoils, and turned back to his native shore loaded down with his ill-gotten gains. Well, there came a terrible storm, and he could not find his way - could not hear the sound of that Inch Cape Bell. The clouds hung heavy and the waves dashed high: "Now where I am I cannot tell, but I wish I could hear the Inch Cape bell," said he. And, the story went on, that he struck on that

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rock. He could not hear the bell, and he lost his ship and his life and his plunder by having given way to the spirit of mischief and plaguing the priest by cutting off the bell, and in that way he had lost his own life. Well, that was the story. Well, that appealed to us as a fellow getting what he deserved. (Well, you see, I have never read that since, and yet there are snatches of it that I can remember yet. That happened when I was a little boy, I suppose probably four or five years old.)

And then, too, in that book there was something said about the necessity of caring for your health. Just think of putting in stuff like that for boys of about four or five !- I think, maybe, of six years old to read; and yet, instead of it being above our heads it stuck in our minds, and it ought to be a part of education to-day. It illustrated this by giving always an example, you know. It said there was a certain merchant who was travelling and had a very severe cold, but was anxious in attending to some business to reach some city-



Edinburg, perhaps. Anyhow, he wanted to make some town, and he couldn't get a seat in the stage coaches of that day, and he took the outside seat. Well, the weather was cold and rainy, so that by the time he reached - (Edinburg, you can call it & he was a pretty sick man, and had to go to bed. A higher fever came on and carried him off in spite of all the doctors could do. Now, it said, if he had been wise and taken the necessary care of his health he would have gone to bed when he had that severe cold, in that stormy weather; then, with care, he might have been saved for a long and useful life.. Well, they gave other examples; and then there were interesting things about the animals, and about different countries and other sketches about the habits of othercountries and their customs. I can remember one of them that struck me as being very queer. It came under the head of "hospitality". A man had committed a murder and he fled. (This was in *Arabia* -----I think). Anyhow, the laws of hospitality in that country were such



that when you requested hospitality and protection against pursuers, they always had to give that, no matter what the crime was that you had committed. In this case the man told how he had gotten into a quarrel and killed a man; told who he was; and it turned out ~~that~~ after he got through that his host told him "You have killed my own brother, but I can't break the laws of hospitality, although you deserve death" - and he mounted him on a swift horse, sent him on his way after feeding him, and told him to make haste, because after a certain time, giving him a chance for his life, he would pursue him and kill him if he could. Well, I thought that was mighty queer. (This is simply a memorandum of such a book containing such stories, and, from my own experience, showing what it had done in ~~fixating~~ lighting up the dull detail, and learning us to write and spell, and so forth.

That was the first school. (Oh ! here is an incident in that line. It is something that has gone almost



into history, I suppose !) It was something that stirred all Scotland and England to emotion. In fact, it stirred the world at that time. It was the most horrible series of murders.)

There was a low sort of lodging house in Edinburg where the very poorest people put up, and for a few pennies they could get permission to lie on the floor or on a bench, you know, and the keeper of that house (this was in Edinburg) if any of his guests died and had no relatives and was not inquired for, he would <sup>sell</sup> always ~~stank~~ the bodies for dissection to the medical school in Edinburg; and then it was that he (Burke, I think his name was) began - Burke began to try to find out who among his guests ~~were~~ <sup>were without</sup> friends and would not be inquired for if they were missing; and he strangled such men and (Hear that muggins !- the Douglas squirrel - one of my friends. Hello !What is it? He came near and saw us. There is a chapter in my first



book devoted to that muggins. He is a squirrel of squirrels !)

The difficulty in getting bodies for dissection made the professors in the University careless about where the bodies came from, and there were no questions asked, so he had disposed of quite a lot - twenty or thirty - before he killed someone who was inquired for, and discovery came, - that he had been strangled and his body sold for (forget how much) to the medical school college for dissection. I think the man who was killed was named Hare, and they called it Burke and Hare. Well, the story of Burke and Hare went through all Scotland, and, I suppose, into England, and ~~EVERYWHERE THROUGHOUT~~ <sup>frightened everybody.</sup> ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~. I suppose every mother was ~~was~~ afraid lest her children be taken, and people were always afraid, too, that the bodies of their friends would be dug up and carried to the dissecting room. It made a most tremendous sensation throughout Scotland. We boys, by means of stories told to us by the servant girls, and then made



still worse by ourselves. We had a different name for them too; we called them the Dandy Doctors. (I don't know just how we got it). We always mentioned the name - Dandy Doctors - under our breaths - it frightened us so that we hardly could sleep at nights. The way it was told to us boys, - the way it came to us - was that it was a Dandy Doctor that was after us; even right in the streets in the town there was a Dandy Doctor, and that if he saw a boy walking along the streets, that old Dandy Doctor had a kind of sticking plaster that was so awfully sticky, and he would just plaster it over our mouths, pop us into a bag quick, and then sell your body to be all cut up to learn "hoo ye are made". Oh! that was an awful fright, so we never ventured out on the streets after dark at that time. The Dandy Doctor was a terror to us! Well, what brought that story to mind was that in our school in Scotland, where the latitude is so high, the Winter days are extremely short. In cloudy weather it would get dark, you know, about three,



or between three and four o'clock, and school wouldn't hardly be out. Sometimes we would be kept in, and our lessons finished by candle light (or gaslight, I have forgotten), but, anyhow, we would get home after dark, and after the Dandy Doctor business, the teacher could not keep us in after dark, for if he did, we would not go out of school unless someone was sent to take us home. We wouldn't go unless someone was sent. Well, I remember one night, before dark, - just a little before dark - we were late getting out of school, and we had to go up to get on the main street - we had to go up the Darvell Bray (A bray is a hill, in Scotland) - that led up from the school house to the main street. We did not mind going up that bray in the broad daylight, until after the Dandy Doctor scare. But this night, as we were going up there, one of the boys gave a yell HNK HNK "A Dandy Doctor ! A Dandy Doctor !", and we all fled pell mell back into the school house, and so astonished Mungo Siddons,



the teacher. I can remember to this day the look on his face ! He had such an amused look, to see everybody, boys and girls back, and flying into the school house; the place of all places we delighted most in getting away from ! And then, one of the older boys said that there was a Dandy Doctor up there on the hill, and "we couldna ga hane". Well, he just laughed at us. Oh ! yes ! someone said, we just saw him, and we were all trembling and in such a state that he saw he wasn't going to get rid of us. Well, there were two scholars who were almost grown-- sixteen or seventeen years old, and hex, too, went out with us a little way and then said "So and so would take us". They took us to the top of the bray, and then they turned off to their own homes, and we scurried for our homes. We scurried into our homes like a pursued squirrel with a dog after it pounces into his hole. And so we escaped from the Dandy Doctor.

One of my cronies, a schoolmate by the name of Wallie Chisolm (Willie Chisolm) - he was a little older



than me - he delighted in making some use of the Dandy Doctor to scare me right in noontday. We were out a mile or two from the town on a public road where teams were passing almost continuously ; and on our way back to town - the road was like many there, I suppose. It was bounded by dykes and stone walls built with lime, but as along toward the crest of the hill we could look over the top of them, and could look down on the mouth of the Frith of Forth. Well, we could see a couple of men sauntering along - it was when the tide was out, and they were gathering seaweed, or picking up shells - they were collecting shells. And Wallie Chisolm, he thought it would be a fine thing to have the fun of frightening me; and to show the terror of that name of the Dandy Doctor, he looked earnestly down (and these two men were probably at a distance of more than half a mile - these men picking up shells) he dodged down behind that wall and whispered to me that they were Dandy Doctors, and he said that they were coming.



Dandy Doctors ! Oh ! What are they going to do? Oh, well, if they see us they would come up and catch us right in broad daylight in the public road !

We got down on our knees and crawled along with our heads down on the way back to town; -- and he, the mug-gins, laughing in his sleeve of course. Oh ! it was a terrible thing.

We had vacation. We always looked forward to that vacation with great interest; and old Mungo would have a lot of gooseberries or something, and give us all a handful of gooseberries, and wish us a happy time. We usually had a week or two. Sometimes Mungo whipped us without cause, but generally he was pretty good teacher. But some of the older boys said he was extra cross when he had taken an extra Drap o' Whiskey that morning; and some said that he excused himself for taking a little whiskey in the morning on the ground that he was very proud of his penmanship, and as he had to write the copy



in our copy books for us to follow, the boys said that that he drank whiskey in the mornings to steady his hand.

That book might have some items in it that would be valuable in education now.

Then a great time came, - to leave the school because I had learned so much, and I had to go to the grammar school; and commence French and Latin and some of the higher studies. Well, it was a great day. I think, maybe, I was about seven or eight when I went there. You might say, though, before that, that running parallel with my first lessons in that first school, father commenced making me learn the first hymns, like "Rock of Ages" and so forth, and in that school we sang. I remember just before the school was dismissed, we all rose and would sing some. Sometimes - maybe in the Spring when the swallows were coming back from their Winter homes:

"Welcome, welcome, little stranger,  
Welcome from a foreign strand;



Safely 'scaped from many a danger,...."

and we would all swing our bodies with the music. I can remember that sometimes when it was very dark, and there was nothing to call out this particular bird or animals-- some of the songs we sang described a whole lot of the animals:

"The whale, the whale, is the beast for me,  
Plunging along through the deep blue sea!"

and so forth. And one of the very nice things, as you come to think of it, - as I remember the tune ran like this:

"Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing,"

and so forth..... and take us safe home ! Oh ! that had a good influence, but it was nothing to the influence of those stories, like the story of the dog. And that old rascal, the Pirate, that got what was coming to him, for plaguing the priest of Aber bro Thauk; and then the chapters on printing, that showed a printing press, illustrating some of the principal things; and the stories of other countries ! It was, as the name would indicate, a



true book of the plain rudiments of knowledge - knowledge in general. It was a remarkably fine thing to do.

But, parallel with those lessons, father began making me learn hymns. And then came the learning of a few verses of the Bible, four or five or six or seven - I can't remember; perhaps it was something like five a day, and I had to get those. At first, he used to bribe me. I can remember when I was a little shaver, the first time I learned "Rock of Ages" he gave me a penny, and I thought I was awfully rich. Boys are not coddled with money in that country. I thought more of a penny than an American boy would of half a dollar ! And it was a great thing to know what to do with that penny ! It was great excitement to rush down to the street after getting through with that hymn, thinking so much more of the penny than of the hymn; and then go out and analyse the offerings in the shop windows in the shape of cookies and buns and oranges and apples and raisins, and earnestly keeping in mind that we were lucky boys; and go the



whole length of the town, and examining the shops on both sides of the street before we could come to a decision as to so important a transaction as the investment of a penny.

One of the early memories ... (I am not sure, but I rather think this came before I went to school - it was one of the earliest things I can remember.) I can remember when my brother committed his (This must have been when I was two years old, I think). It was either Dave or Dan -- I think it was David - the first one - the next brother to me. I would be about two years old at the time. In Scotland, there never was any question about vaccination when they were babies. I can remember very well my trouble about David. The doctor took his lances and began scratching and scratching a little until he drew a little blood, and then applied the vaccine. Well, this doctor was a great dignified looking man in black clothing, and I couldn't imagine what they were doing to my brother; but I was reassured by seeing that my



mother was not frightened, so I stood and looked on; and I saw him scratching with that thing, and when I saw the blood come I took the alarm; I couldn't even trust my mother any longer in that business. I immediately made a spring, and although I was only a little baby I managed to spring up and get a hold on his arm, and managed to sink my teeth into his arm too. (Children, you know, are like animals. When they are little, the first thing is their teeth (!) And, to my astonishment, the doctor laughed when I bit him, and mother - mother joined in the laugh. That was the first time that I can remember being utterly astonished that mother should laugh at the man hurting my brother; as I bit him I yelled out that I was na gang to let him hurt my bonny brother - my beautiful brother.

(Well, now, let me see !) I can remember that in our garden each of us had a little garden. We had each of us a little bit of ground in the garden that was our own garden, that was probably about four or five feet long, and three or four wide, and we had our own plants



in there; and we used to put in beans and peas, and wonder how long it would take them to grow, and we used to take them up every day or so to see how long it would take them to come up. And I can remember that we were all very fond of flowers. In fact, we all were? I do n't know that I was any different from my brothers and sisters. And I distinctly remember that my aunt had a corner assigned to her in our garden, and that it was full of tulips and lilies, and we all looked with the utmost respect and wonder and admiration at that beautiful garden, with those great lilies, and wondered whether, when we were men and women, we would be rich enough to own a garden like that. We thought that each one of those lilies was worth an enormous sum of money. We never dared touch one of them. We really had a perfect awe of them. We thought they were so much in advance of our garden. I thought them glorious. I can remember thinking how it would be if I ever got rich enough to



~~xxxxxlittlexgarden~~

own a lily garden. I suppose that my brothers and sisters, maybe, felt the same way, but I never heard them say.

And it was when I was a little boy too, at that xx school, that they had a kind of a flower show in Dunbar; and when the show was over (I never saw the show, it was in rooms - I never was admitted, but I saw a number of the exhibitors carrying the exhibits). I was particularly taken with the great handfuls of Dahlias. They were plants that we had no specimens of in our garden, and I thought they were most beautiful. Marvellous plants !! I used to wonder if I would ever be rich enough to have some of those great big Dahlias. But although I never dared touch that sacred lily garden of my aunt's, I did steal flowers outside; in fact it was about the first theft I remember having committed. Oh, I suppose I stole sugar and jam, like every boy, but I do not remember; but I do remember, and have good cause to remember, stealing flowers from an apothecary's garden. Peter Lawson, he was a druggist and he also answered the purpose of a regular physician to most of the poor people. They always had faith in Pete Lawson. They would go and tell him they had a 'sair belly' (Or sore stomach !) and he would prescribe for them. They all had faith in Pete Lawson. I remember he had a pony, which we considered a very wild



beast. Well, when Pete would sometimes be called out of town he would mount this pony (ponny they called it in Scotland), and he would stand up on his hind legs and buck and jump so before Pete could get him to go, and we boys would look on in perfect wonder at such a wild horse, and wonder how Pete was so brave as to get on that beast's back. Father used to own a horse, I can remember, and he used to put me on him when he was leading him out to pasture, and I would hold on to his mane. (All those little bits of interest come to memory; but this one was what was called a 'kearney' (kearney meant gentle) horse; but this Pete Lawson's horse was a terribly wild beast, and whenever he would get on him, he would kick, and so forth.

Peter had a great love for flowers; that fellow, he had a fine garden, and it was surrounded by an iron fence; and I would watch, when I thought no one saw me, reach through between the iron railings and make a snatch at some little flower, and take to my heels



Pete discovered me one day, and he dashed out on to the street and caught me, and I screamed that I wouldn't steal any more of his flowers if he would let me go. He didn't say anything, but just dragged me right along to the back of his house, then on to the stable where he kept the wild pony, and chucked me in right back of that horse's heels. I was bellowing, of course, but when he opened the door, and I saw where he was putting me, the superior fear of being kicked to death quenched the bellowing short, just as soon as I was shut in, for I thought instinctively, in a moment, that if I made a noise that horse would kick. My only hope was in keeping quiet; but I was afraid almost to death! He put me back of that horse, and shut the door and left me. But you can imagine the agony I endured! I didn't steal any more of his flowers. He was a good judge of human nature, I guess.

I also have a very good memory of about that time, (I suppose I was probably three years old - not



more than three. This probably was before I had stolen his flowers.) I remember that the servant girl had to wash- give us ab bath, particularly every Saturday night, or Wednesday and Saturday (some regular stated times, you know) before putting us to bed. The servant girl would plump us into a great tub, and we simply dreaded it, because it always hurt, - the coarse soap or something they had, but we all had to take our turns at it; and I was sitting waiting for my turn, near the fire in the fire place - we were doing this near the fire so that we would not take cold. My sister Sarah, the next older than me, she wanted the three-legged stool that I was sitting on, - wanted to get me off; so she just got a hold of the legs, gave it a hoist, and tipped me off, and I was talking at the time, and my mouth was open, and I suppose my tongue got in the way of my teeth, and the upshot of it was that I cut a deep gash in the side of my tongue and  
profusely  
(a wounded tongue bleeds very easily you know) a stream



tongue to this day. It must have cut a gash clear through my tongue, as though you had cut it with a scissors for about half an inch. Blood gushed out, of course, and I yelled out, while Mother came running in in a great hurry. They found that my tongue was out, and they wrapped me up and told the servant girl to run with me through the garden, and out through a gate by the back way to the main street, and to Pete Lawson's, to do something to quench the blood. He simply took a piece of cotton and soaked it in some astringent, I suppose, and told me to keep my mouth shut, and that it would be all well. Well they got me back, and put me to bed, and told me I would soon be well, to lie down and sleep like a 'gude bairn', and just as I was dropping off to sleep, the accumulation of saliva, I suppose, bothered me, and I tried to swallow, and I suppose the effort to do so excited irritation, and I swallowed the cotton and everything else. Well, when that cotton was going down my throat I was terror stricken. I thought I had swallowed the whole of my tongue, and that



would be a bad loss, and so I gave a piercing yell, causing mother to come bouncing into the room. She wanted to know what was the matter. I yelled out that I had swallowed my tongue; and it was another cause of amazement that mother laughed at me, when I supposed that she would be stricken with consternation at the awful loss that her boy had sustained.

While I was always rather a favorite with my sisters, who were older than me, the two of them would oftentimes when I would be talking a little too much (it was a common weapon with them) they would say, "It is a pity but what you had swallowed that tongue, or at least half of it. You make too much noise. You talk too much. (I think that is about all that I can remember about it that is worth telling.)

Now, we shall go back to the school, I think. I suppose I ought to mention that in that school we were supposed to fight a good deal. It is so common in the old country; it got to be a regular business. If there



was any doubt who was boss we always settled it in that way. We would go back of the Darvel Bray, where there was a quiet place, and fight it out and have the matter settled. And playing at war was another thing in that school. The boys were always telling stories of wars, although we did not know anything about history much we would hear of it. To be a good 'faighter!, you know, was the main thing in school. It was a great thing to be a good fighter. It was the idol of our ambition. We would often go to war - regular war, something more exciting than personal combat. We would divide into two armies, and if there was snow on the ground we would make snowballs and batter each other, and one excite the other to do or die. They would keep yelling some battle cry like "The Last War in India !!" The Last War in India !!" and they would pile in the snowballs, and there would probably come a time when we would throw sand at each other. We had those blue Scotch bonnets, and we would fill them up with sand and fire them at each other, taking



the place of cannon, I suppose.

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When I went over to the other school, of course I had a terrible lot of fighting to do, because a new scholar had to meet everybody who thought he could lick him, this being the usual introduction to a new school. It was not only exciting, but trying, on account of taking up new studies, sets of new books, and getting acquainted with a new master and his rules. And, then, I had to fight everybody who thought he could lick me! It was a very strenuous period for the first month or so!

I commenced Latin and French first, I think, I commenced French, and then Latin afterwards. The good-natured teacher would read for us, and show us how to pronounce the words, and we would laugh, and he would smile, but that passed away in a few days. Then, whenever we failed to pronounce a word right he would say "That's all", and then came in his patent cuticle cure for forgetfulness, and that was hard. We had to get a lesson in reading French, easy French, you know, Fontaine's Fables, and such easy stuff as that. And then we had to get a gram-



mar, and reel that off, and we hept at that until actually I committed the whole confused thing to memory. We also got a lesson in grammer and composition, and in reading, - three lessons to get every day; and then they had three also in Latin, and, also, we had to have a lesson in English grammar, one or two. I don't remember being called on to compose anything in English, but we had to learn the grammar by heart, and recite it. And then we had to read in good books - some of them were pretty ggod; some history to learn; geography - we had to have a regular lesson in that, and it kept us very busy. It was a serious thing. There was nothing heard in those days of the danger of cramming, and the danger of letting scholars study their lessons at home instead of letting their little brains rest- nothing of that kind. There was no attempt to make the acquisition of learning easy. We were bound blank straight to it, like a general who hangs up the name 'Up and at him !!'

We would take all our books home in a strap - a large



number of them, and commit to memory a lesson~~xx~~ out of each that night before we went to bed, and to do that we had to just sit down and bend our attention as closely as any lawyer on a great million dollar case. I can't conceive of anything that would interest menow that would enable me to concentrate my attention more fully than when I was a mere strippling boy, and it was all done by whipping - thrashing in general. The Scotch do not believe in any short cut to knowledge, or any new fangled method, physocological method, such as in vogue so much at the present time. There was nothing said about making the seats easy, with easy backs, and nothing said about the direction in which the light ought to fall upon our backs. Just simply: 'There is your lesson, and you get that lesson by heart !', and if we failed to get the lesson perfect, we simply were whipped; for instead of applying any of the methods of getting knowledge into people by easy methods, the Scotch simply made the discovery that there was a connection between the skin and the memory. That was



the great educational discovery (and you can call it 'pyscological, if you like !), and that by irritating the skin and exciting the memory ..... When you <sup>forgot</sup> ~~xxxxx~~any-thing, all that was necessary was to apply this outicle cure to your weak memory. And you might say that the whole educational system, if there was anything worth calling a system, - the whole educational system was founded on leather.

In the matter of the fighting, it was carried on still more vigorously in the high school than in the common school. Whenever any one was challenged, either the challenge was allowed, or it was decided by a battle. The schoolroom was on the side of the shore, just on the first rising ground above the sand, surrounded by a high wall, but still, in storms, the sea and spray came flying over that wall into our playground. If we could be so fortunate after fighting a battle out as not to have got a discolored eye, a black eye, but simply bloody noses, why we could



wash that off at the well on the way home, and so hide the marks of the fray. But if any of us had a black eye that was fresh when we got home after fights, we would try to say that the others struck first, but this kind of nonsense never, never, never made any difference. We all of us got a good thrashing for fighting; but it had not the slightest influence for stopping it, that was the queer thing.

So, not recognized by teachers as a desirable aid to education, this mauling of each other and fighting it still had its uses ! We developed a kind of fortitude and endurance of pain; and the thrashings we got, in particular, they taught us a kind of <sup>Indian</sup> ~~enduring~~ fortitude, for if we did not endure the pain of a thrashing without flinching, we were mocked on the playground, and public opinion on a Scotch playground was <sup>a</sup> very powerful agent in controlling our behaviour; so we managed to keep our features in a state of repose while enduring pain that would try an American Indian, and, by Jove, that fighting also



prepared us for war. We were all going to be soldiers. And besides our personal, single, combats, we sometimes would meet the scholars of another school on Saturdays, when they would be out, and very little was required to occasion strained relations, as they call it among older people, and it brought on war. Sometimes the immediate cause would be nothing more than simply an impudent, ~~sh-~~ ~~xxxxxxxx~~ disrespectful stare - a scholar of the rival school at one of our scholars; and perhaps the scholar who had been disrespectfully stared at would inquire 'What are ye glowerin at, Billie?' (Glowering - a glower is a kind of an angry stare). 'What are ye glowerin at, Billie?' Billie would say 'I'll look whare I hae a mind' (I'll look ~~xxxxxx~~ where I have a mind) 'And hender me if ye dar' (Hinder me if you dare). Well, a Scotch boy isn't going to be dared, you know, and he says 'I'll soon let ye see whether I'll be dared or no !' and he draws off and gives him a blow, and then the battle begins; and then the whole school is drawn into it. on both sides.



And then there is a dandy old scrap, and they duck and wrestle and tear each other's clothes, and there is in-fighting and out-fighting, and throwing sand and other missiles that they can get a hold of, and after both sides are exhausted and covered all over with sweat, and considerable blood from noses and bruises, then one will shout out loud enough to be heard above the din 'Hi ! I'll tell ye what I'll do with you. You let me alone, and I'll let you alone' '. And the war is over. (A peace was declared something like that between Japan and Russia'. They simply glared at each other, and then quit !)

Well, that is about how most wars end, you know. They start talking about honor, or something or another, and then they abuse each other, and declare thus and thus - a boys'war - a big boys' war... no sense in it; and yet it appears so universal in the old country, there must be some good in it.

I went back to Scotland - after having something like - let's see - 11 years old - that would be in 38,48,



49, yes, it was 49, I think, when we came; then from 49 until along about - I think 96, if I am not mistaken - how many years was that? Forty-seven years after-wards I went back to that school. I went back to Scotland, and I found I had a cousin living in Dunbar, and she introduced me to the minister who was acquainted with the history of that school, and who obtained for me an introduction from the teacher to come and take dinner with him, or tea. So the minister and myself were entertained by the new teacher. The old one had been master of the school for twenty or thirty years after I left, and he finally went on to England and they had a new teacher. I spoke of the amusements and fights of my old school days there, and the minister said to this teacher, 'Now don't you wish that you had been teacher when John Muir was in school?' And 'What would you give now to have had the honor of walloping John Muir.?' That is one pleasure suggested by the brother, which shows that he had fight in him, too ! - The Honor of walloning John Muir !



I went to see the old school house too. The old building, ~~xxxxxx~~, it was built of free stone, and perfectly sound, but the desks were almost whittled away. Not very good order was kept in the school on account of the school-master's fondness for a drink every now and then, compelling him to leave the school, because this Government school had a house for the teachers. There were two schools one for teaching mathematics..... and one they called the grammar school, that I attended, and the home for both of these was in the big free-stone house, within eight or ten yards of the school; so that the teacher just had to step out to his own home to get a drink, and come back.

The moment that he went out, every scholar moved as one, jumped up and left his seat and his lessons, and they would get down under the benches and pull each other down by the legs and crawl around, and the amount of disorder and din that could be accomplished inside of half a minute was most astonishing. The attraction which held the schol-



ars in anything like order was of so feeble a kind that they disintegrated into individuals, and those individuals, all their discipline went to wreck when they were left alone that short time. We could carry on war even inside the two or three minutes; get into all kinds of squabbles under the benches. One would give the alarm when he opened the door of his house to come back, and it was a great feat to get into our places again. Then he would come in and take a cane and strike a desk a resounding blow, and shout "Silence !"

Our amusements ~~when~~ on Saturday afternoons, when there was no school, both at the first school and second, principally consisted in going out into the country, running away from home. Father forbid my brother David and I from going out into the country because we would be learning to say bad words. He told us that we could play as much as we liked in our backyard and in our garden. We had a good garden. But we ran away regularly. When father



was busy with something, we would steal out and join our companions and start out into the country to rob birds' nests, steal turnips, rob orchards - anything that was eatable; anything that we could steal; go out and cut wood for whistles, all that sort of thing; and when there wasn't anything doing in the way of anything we could steal, simply go out on running matches, a dozen or so of us - start out on a race; and that was simply a test of endurance. Well, we would run, and run and run, and keep a going, following one of those fine macadamized roads into the country, just like hounds; never seemed to be able to tire us out: We thought nothing of going a distance of something like ten or fifteen miles before we would turn back. We did not know anything about taking time by the sun, and none of us had a watch, you know, in those days. We never thought anything about the time, but when it began to turn dark we began to think about going home; and in the Summer time it didn't go dark until ten or eleven o'clock, and the consequence was that sometimes we had to run twenty or thirty miles before we got home. And then a thorough good thrashing! We never failed to get a thrashing at home, unless father was away from home, or, in rare instances, when he was ~~with~~ out but was soon to be in. Mother would make haste to get us chucked into bed before father came, and we always pretended to be asleep; and we escaped the thrashing next morning; for, in cold blood, father never



never felt like thrashing us! but at night we always got it. But, mark you !it never was the means of preventing us from going out one single time ! It was never any use as a preventive; it may have had other uses, but as a preventive it was of no use at all; simply taught us to lie, without being of any use or benefit.

Oh !there was a natural charm about running, hunting birds' nests, going out into the fresh country after being shut up in the school house all the week, that would carry us through everything in the way of a thrashing. We never thought of a thrashing when we were out; only when we got near home; but then, when Saturday came again we would steal away as far as we could into the country again. Those were my first excursions - my first exploring expeditions, - the beginning of my exploring expeditions.

The only trouble that we had in those races was this (Scotch children are extremely tough) - but there is what you call "Stitch in your side" - would bother us a good deal, and one of the boys started the story



that sucking raw eggs would cure that; and we had some hens in our back yard, and on the next Saturday we would manage to go and steal a couple of eggs apiece, and the horrid, slimy things ( I have a perfect horror of a raw egg - it was an awful strain to swallow it ! but we would do anything that would help make us good runners. We would make an awful face, and swallow it, and then immediately dash out and go on a twenty or thirty mile run, to see if it was true; to see if it was really efficacious; 'put the medicine to the proof'.

Boys are cruel, and at the same time they may have their tender hearts. That is a curious thing; a man is a curious mixture, and so is a boy. There are savage traits in all, and some of those traits, like love of your neighbor, and love of animals. One of our amusements, when father would make out to have us locked up in the back yard, I remember, some few times <sup>that</sup> ~~that~~ we were tied up there, to play in the back of the house ---

*there were several cats there, and the cats knew what was*



were enemies. One time in particular, I remember we commenced throwing small stones at a cat, not wishing to hurt her very much, but still, it was a tempting mark. She took refuge in the stable, and got up on the top of the hay manger. We threw lots of small stones at her, and she just kind of blinked there, and never shrunk at all, showing that when we did happen to hit her, it didn't hurt. Then we thought we might venture to take stones a little ~~bit larger~~ bit larger, and our wild instincts to hurt grew as they were indulged; and I happened to strike her full force with a tolerably sized pebble, and she still blinked and look at me, but appeared to fell in pain; and I said 'I must have wounded her, and now we must kill her and put her out of pain'. That is the way savagery grew; and they all seconded my motion, and we all began throwing terribly big chunks at her, to put her out of pain; but that old fellow knew what characters we were, and thought it was time to clear out. I remember striking her with half of a brick, and



Tom thought that he couldn't stand that. He gave a kind of a Whirr, and jumped over our heads, and landed back of us before we could get him, got out on the roof and then on top of the garden wall, jumped down, and fled the country.

We also experimented to some extent with the cats to verify a common saying that was oftentimes heard, - that a cat had ninek lives, were awfully hard to kill, and that no matter how far they fell they always landed on their feet. We caught a cat and got him somehow smuggled up to the upper story, and that cat, I do not know how in the world we managed to drop him, for he knew that it was dangerous as soon as we opened that window and held him out there over the window sill. He made violent efforts to get back over the window sill, but we determined to carry the thing through in the interests of science, and we managed to drop that cat. I can remember it to this day - the awful concern of the poor creature when he was falling, and the way that the poor



thing balanced himself, and didn't land right side up, but landed very hard on the stone-lined backyard.

It was a barbarous thing to do, but he did keep his feet.

We didn't need to do that over again. That scientific problem was solved on our part; but the poor thing jolted his chin when he landed, and made a black and blue mark, but he got up, and went off none the worse.

And then, showing the savagery of the boys of my class - we were delighted to get admittance to a slaughter house where they were sticking pigs. We would go a long way to see a pig killed. I don't feel that way at all now. But in those days, we would climb on the roofs or anything to get a view of the beautiful business of killing a pig. And the next thing was bribing the butcher boy to give us a bladder to blow up and gather for a football. That was another thing.

In our back yard there were three elm trees, and a robin - a fine singer - a pair of robins had nests in one of the elm trees, and the young were almost ready to



fly. It was at a time when a few of the Scottish Guards billeted on us. We used to watch them polishing their belts and swords, and think that we would all be soldiers some day. But the soldiers noticed that nest up in the elm tree, and climbed the tree, and when the old birds saw the soldiers approaching the nest they showed great concern of course, and we children sympathized with those two robins in their distress, and when they reached the nest a few of the young ones flew out, but they could not fly away; they simply fluttered to the ground, and the poor mothers would go down to the ground and scream over them, and make a great fuss, but the soldiers carried them off to sell; they were worth twopence or threepence or sixpence apiece.

Well, of course, those terrified screams and cries of the little birds themselves, and their terror at being carried away, and the distress of the mothers - we could see through all that, and sympathize with them; so that we all - the whole family of us, sisters and brothers,



were sobbing and crying. Oh ! I can remember how our hearts fairly ached, you know. Mother put us all to bed, and said that the little birds would be put into a cage, and nothing would hurt them, but we told of the poor mothers, and how they were crying; and then we would begin sobbing and crying again. And at the same time (D----- it ! We would be doing things to drive them out of their nests ! A boy is a great mixture, you know. I have often thought of that.

(Aug. 17).

One of our recreations was in scrambling among the crags and ruins of famous old Dunbar castle, very famous in Scottish history. It was to that old castle that Edward, after his defeat at Bannockburn, fled, and made his escape to England from there by way of Berwick on the Tweed. We tried to see who could climb highest on the peaks and crags of that old masonry, a thousand years old. The mortar was so good, and the work was so good in that